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THE TORONTO HARBOUR PLAN OF 1912: MANUFACTURING GOALS AND ECONOMIC REALITIES

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INTRODUCTION

The Harbour Commissioners' plan of 1912 can be seen as a major step in municipal enterprise, but paradoxically near the end point of the strongest era of promoting municipal action ever experienced in Toronto. It fulfilled to a large degree the aspirations of civic, business and professional leaders who for several decades had advocated the reshaping of one of the city's greatest assets — the waterfront. Still, the timing of the plan marked the limits to an era when Toronto or any other municipality believed it could achieve great public goals on its own. In that period civic action reached it highest pitch ever as defined by its degree of financial autonomy from the province and the willingness of citizens and politicians to create the public systems most of which are used today.

But for at least two decades after 1913 municipal action largely drifted. Municipalized public transit in 1921 — already certain by 1912 — a stabilized civic service and widened education were major subsequent improvements. But after Toronto stopped annexing outlying areas in 1912, no satisfactory governing system for the urbanizing region could be worked out for four decades. Financial pressures on Toronto and adjoining municipalities, heightened in the early 1930s, forged a gradual process leading toward the eventual formation of Metro and stronger contribution toward municipal finances by the province.

My first task is to consider why, at the end of the period of rapid growth, the commissioners put manufacturing as the centrepiece of the 1912 plan, and specifically what kinds of industry they expected, or in current parlance, what was their industrial strategy. The second part of my story attempts to explain why the expectations of the commissioners and the city were not fulfilled. Plants came only slowly. Also, rather than the locale of a great deal of high value-added industry, the Ashbridge's Bay and Central Waterfront fills were destined only to become by the early 1930s Toronto's major foci for bulk storage and to a lesser degree for bulk processing. The commissioners were correct in reflecting the rapid industrialization of the city in their plan, but they could not see the economic turndown that would soon follow nor that the new Welland Canal would not open until 1931. Neither did they recognize early enough that they were competing for manufacturers who were rail rather than water oriented. In short, their industrial strategy was too expansive and too unfocused.

PRECONDITIONS: GROWTH AND CORPORATIZATION OF THE ECONOMY

The period 1880-1913 was characterized by rapid population growth so much so that Toronto moved dramatically up the scale of North American cities. It was an era when Ontario's secondary manufacturing became much more concentrated in Toronto, and much of it by corporations. Toronto joined Montreal in financing and in organizing financing of mining and western development. These economic developments fostered population growth, in large measure because of domestic and international migration, and created an affluent city.

Within Toronto the period saw the maturation of public health, control of rapid growth through annexations and other municipal measures, the laying out of a complete public infrastructure, the first round of city planning, the establishment of new professions dealing with property and social welfare, the rise of the popular print media that devoted much space to municipal matters, the first skyscrapers reflecting economic power and office work, and a powerful urge to fill in the waterfront. Toronto was by no means exceptional in these regards. Growing up late it had to learn from its innovative predecessors, notably New York and fabulously expanding Chicago, and indeed from other Great Lake cities like Buffalo and Cleveland whose growth all ran ahead of Toronto's. What was distinctive about Toronto was its governing, its "tory interventionism" to use Harold Kaplan's apt phrase,[1] that would pay off more clearly in the long run of the 20th century as Toronto clearly outpaced and outshone its metropolitan neighbours in northeastern United States. Let us consider these factors.

First, rapid population growth. Relative population increase is our simplest (if indirect and not always accurate) measure of expanding material abundance. Not only is it easier to calculate than say economic or income growth, but it shows that many people respond directly to the prospects of material well being. Would-be, especially young, migrants are very sensitive to job possibilities. In 1880 Toronto was well positioned to become a metropolis; owing in large measure to its status as capital, its earlier growth had put it first among Ontario cities. But Ontario was slower to develop than the adjacent states of New York, Ohio and Michigan. Emigration from Canada had been greater than immigration reflecting greater opportunities south of the border. Hence, Toronto only followed Buffalo and

Cleveland, and lagged well behind New York, Philadelphia and the great shock city of the era, Chicago.

Between 1880 and 1912 it grew so fast, however, as to catch up to Buffalo which had been twice as large earlier. Overall, on the continent it moved from the ranks of the mid twenties or lower to about twelfth. (Today it is ranked seventh or eighth together with four in the US, Montreal about twentieth.) In the 1880s Toronto more than doubled from roughly 70,000 to 170,000. Despite a slower pace of economic development after the downswing in 1873, like other well-placed commercial cities in the English-speaking world, Toronto did extremely well in the 1880s.[2] Supplementing natural increase in a relatively young population were European immigrants, in Toronto's case, primarily from Britain, and rural and small town offspring as the economic and social virtues of farming began to wear off.

In 1889 the bloom faded on this rosy picture, and for half a decade Toronto like most other places was plunged into depression which bottomed out in 1893. This was the "gilded age" in the United States, rather like the 1930s when only the rich could enjoy the gilt. But the depression was not nearly as severe as in Australia and New Zealand. Melbourne may well have been the richest city in the world in the 1880s; starvation stalked its streets in the early 1890s.[3] If poor conditions were less conspicuous, nonetheless, Toronto grew by only 30,000 over the decade to about 200,000 in 1900.

Recovery began slowly after 1896 but by 1900 was in full swing. Except for a sharp downturn in 1907 and 1908, economic and population growth in Canada and especially in Toronto accelerated. In fact, the greatest surge occurred between 1909 and 1913 when Toronto reached 450,000. An interesting comparison is with Sydney: in 1900 Toronto totalled only two-fifths of the antipodean leader, by 1912 it had reached two-thirds.[4] It gained on Montreal, even while the latter improved its status to ninth in North America, though it could not grow as rapidly as the very new cities in the west. Yet it had clearly joined the ranks of metropolises.

As a share of Ontario's population between 1880 and 1912 Toronto jumped from less than 5 per cent to over 15 per cent, most strikingly after 1900. Toronto added more than any

other Ontario city during the first decade of this century; whereas in 1901 it had been three and a quarter times the next largest (Ottawa) in 1911 it reached four and a third times Ottawa and Hamilton. As in the 1880s young rural Ontarians contributed to Toronto's growth; by 1911, primarily owing to Toronto, Ontario urban dwellers exceeded rural folk, whereas in 1881 they had been only 30 per cent of the total. Immigrants from overseas swelled the ranks, again mainly English and Scots. Interestingly, though, Toronto only modestly shared in the arrival of eastern and southern Europeans with large American cities, clearly the cities with the greatest opportunities, or at least still with the reputation of providing jobs.[5]

Wilfred Laurier's pronouncement that the twentieth century would belong to Canada was undoubtedly correct (unless one wants to load hegemonic notions on the idea). Tory Torontonians probably saw the fabulous expansion of the Queen City of the West as divine intervention for its upright stance on every moral issue. Mundanely it meant that problems had to be solved; to some it meant that Toronto should shed its mundanity by promoting growth and asserting aesthetic qualities. Rapid growth has a way of exciting the passions to such a pitch that caution was thrown to the winds. Fortunately for Torontonians its predecessors and ancestors did not let matters get too far out of hand.

The magnificent growth of the city was based on a changing economy in the western world that favoured large cities in general and some in particular, mostly those that were well diversified already. While much of Toronto's success can be attributed to luck, that is, no one group of people could be certain that their planning would increase their share of the global system, certainly some financiers and industrialists organized their ventures so that they as residents of Toronto benefitted. Their workers would also gain in varying degrees.

Compared to Montreal, Toronto possessed an agricultural hinterland that was inherently more fertile, and thus in the longer run had a firmer base on which to build. Sweeping aside the mid-century challenge of Hamilton wholesalers, by 1880 Toronto merchants had consolidated their top position in supplying much of rural Ontario's retail trade. By then the railway traffic was more clearly focused on Toronto. The west was opening; Eaton's catalogue followed as did the branches of the banks. Although Montreal

businessmen benefited from the west, undoubtedly Toronto derived more from the connection.[6]

Financial institutions emerged to challenge St. James Street if hardly Wall Street; by 1912 the Bank of Commerce was ranked with the two based in Montreal, Royal and Montreal. A clear signal was the astute move of the Bank of Nova Scotia (in all but name and its official head office) to Toronto in 1901.[7] Toronto, Imperial, and Dominion also made gains; their staffs in the central offices in the central business district expanded enormously.[8] The Toronto banks along with the big two in Montreal were in the process of absorbing all the regional banks — a process that was completed in the mid 1920s. Its stock exchanges emerged, especially for mining in the 1890s though lagging behind Montreal in handling industrial issues until the 1930s.[9] By 1913 Toronto had virtually caught up to Montreal. In fact, its downtown cityscape sporting skyscrapers made it appear even more like a miniature New York and Chicago than Montreal's.

The north, the eldorado of the shield, fell largely under Toronto's control. (Cobalt, silver, gold and of course nickel.) Toronto's mining stock market of 1898, combining two earlier ones, became renowned as a channel for investment. The opening of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway by the Ontario government in 1905 provided access to Cobalt, Kirkland Lake, Timmins and Noranda/Rouyn. The impact of mining wealth was strong near the end of the period under survey.[10] It was said that rich neighbourhoods such as Deer Park and Forest Hill were built from the profits.[11]

Of great importance was the concentration of Canada's manufacturing in Toronto. As crucial was the quality of this manufacturing. Industrial organizations expanded. Owners of new types of processing found it easier to be near sources of funding and labour power. Since by 1880 Toronto had outstripped other urban places in Ontario, it had become the largest consumer market and so attracted market-oriented processors. The rise of steam was also a factor in pulling to the city what had been rural water-powered based manufacturing in the early nineteenth century. Toronto did not have any special advantage in water power, especially when the rural population was scattered in any case. But cheap coal mainly from Pennsylvania allowed the release of industry from waterpower. As the society became more

affluent and as new technologies burst on the scene from Britain and increasingly the United States, Toronto became the beneficiary of new increasingly specialized industries. A multiplier effect worked, with industries feeding others. Then in the early 1880s steam generated electricity and after 1911 Niagara hydroelectricity began to run Toronto's factories.[12] Toronto gained more than Montreal, as was noted by harbour commissioner Robert Gourlay in 1913.[13] Expansion was apparent on the landscape: building permits for new factories and warehouses were issued in ever greater numbers, reaching a crescendo in 1911 and 1912 when nearly two hundred were recorded.[14]

The types of manufacturing moving to and appearing in Toronto is actually more significant in understanding the actions of the harbour commissioners. Toronto gathered in the highest quality, with the highest value added, intermediate and consumer goods. Signifying this was the shift of the production of shoes, textile weaving and knit goods in the late depressed 1870s to lower-waged Quebec, while retaining higher value women's clothing as has persisted to the present. More important was the oft-noted move of Hart Massey from Newcastle to Toronto in 1879. Massey combined with the Brantford firm of Harris in 1891 and even bought out American firms to become one the strongest farm implement makers in the world. Perhaps as central as the processing itself, was the control by Massey of plants that continued in Brantford and elsewhere. Management decisions connote control over money and hence can be seen as an ingredient in the financial community. A whole range of high value metal working and electrical goods firms emerged. Of high importance too was the development of the publishing and printing businesses. As the most affluent city it is not surprising that Toronto gained greatly on English-speaking Montreal during this period. Even by 1880 Ontario's value-added share exceeded Quebec's by a ratio of three to two, and so of Toronto over Montreal (Figure 1).[15]

As for heavy industry, that is primary iron and steel, Hamilton emerged as the leader just at the turn of the century with formation of a predecessor of Stelco. Its harbour, not Toronto's, therefore received the greatest tonnages of iron ore and coal. Presumably most of the finished products were shipped by rail. As a byproduct Toronto would avoid pollution

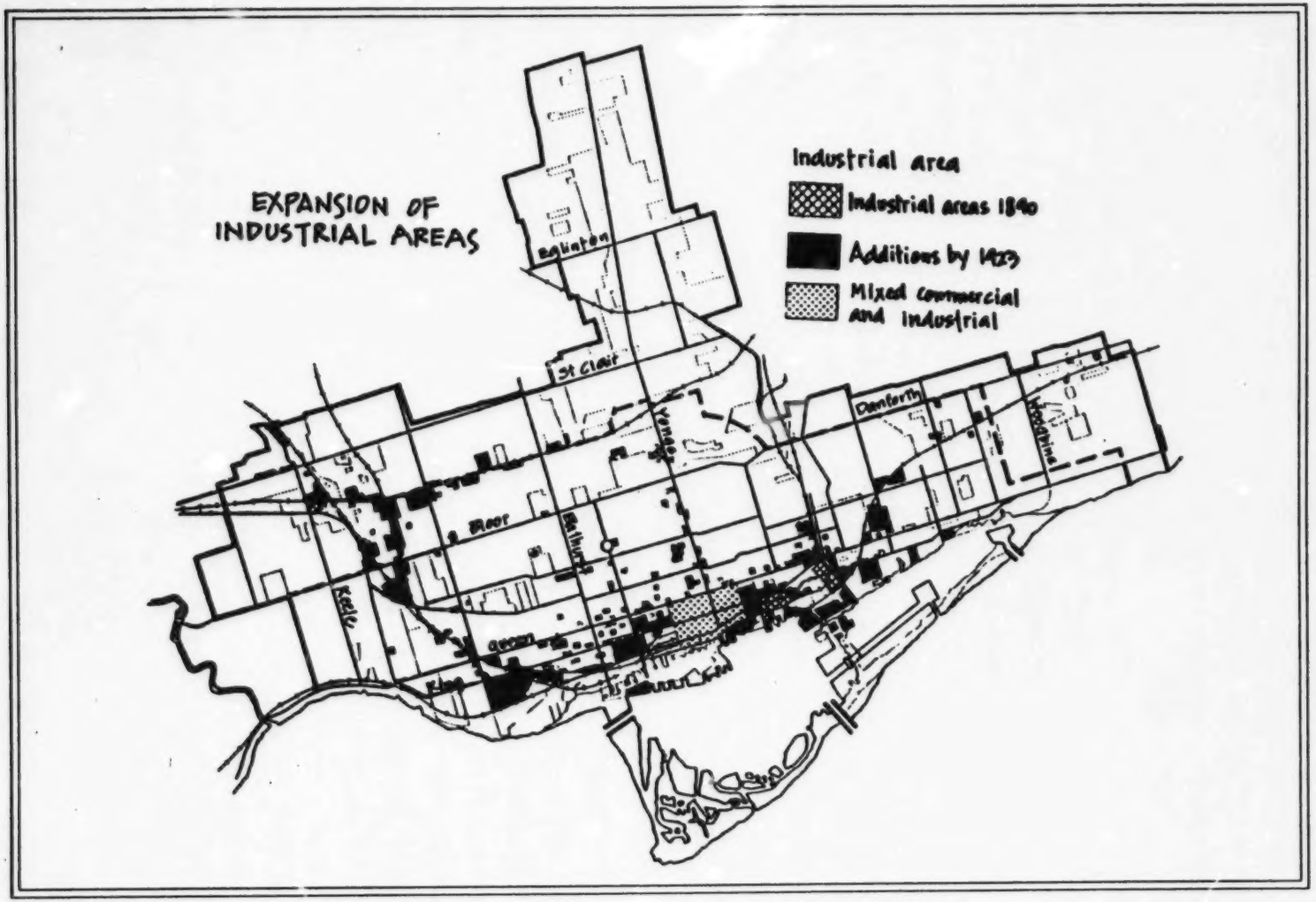

FIGURE 1 *Investment in 1912 was only exceeded by that of 1911.*

Source: Draft for *The Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume III* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, forthcoming 1990). Courtesy of the authors, Gunter Gad and Deryck Holdsworth, and the editors of the volume, Donald Kerr, Deryck Holdsworth and Geoffrey Matthews.

thanks to Hamilton, just as Chicagoans could thank U. S. Steel for putting its plant in Gary. Buffalonians were not so lucky with the proximity of their steel works at Lackawanna.

Although Hamilton acquired considerable and diverse metal-working high-value manufacturing, enough for business leaders to claim that it had become the Birmingham of Canada — and more industrial employment than Toronto after 1900 — basic steel made it more like a smoggy working-class Tyneside. Toronto could more easily take on the title of Birmingham.[16] In passing, it should be noted that both Hamilton and Toronto had easily surpassed another would-be Birmingham, waterpower-based Gananoque. Those who complained that Toronto's leaders failed the city by allowing the steel works to locate in Hamilton did not understand as we do today that Hamilton was becoming an industrial suburb of Toronto.[17]

Manufacturing was of higher value which undoubtedly helped to make Toronto a richer place on the average than Hamilton and Montreal. The greater proportion of craft workers and their unions compared to the nonunionized industrial workers in Hamilton who had to await the 1940s for recognition and high wages. The craft workers were well organized, making considerable income gains during the 1880s partially through strikes and other industrial actions.[18]

The emergence of corporate structures in manufacturing, transportation and finance was another important condition concentrating activity in Toronto. Much of the late nineteenth century financing of Canadian development came from British investors. Around the turn of the century and especially between 1909 and 1913, Americans saw the virtue of branch plants behind the tariff walls, and thus invested directly rather than indirectly as had largely been the case with the British. Mergers became conspicuous; horizontal integration, that is, buying out one's competitors, was married to vertical integration, that is, controls backward to resources and forward to marketing. While American entrepreneurs pioneered these organizational features, Canadians were not far behind. The most significant was the action of great Toronto financiers who like their counterparts in Montreal engaged in a range of fields — transportation, manufacturing, energy, and of course real estate. Society had to reckon with the Mackenzies, the Manns, the Nicholls, the Pellatts. The enormous wealth and power

of these corporate leaders brought the response of regulation and of large public enterprises. The Harbour Commission has to be seen as arising from these general conditions.[19]

PRECONDITIONS: GOVERNING THE CITY

In his *Unheralded Triumph* Jon Teaford describes the process of building marvellous public works in American metropolises in the late nineteenth century.[20] These successful innovations occurred despite the enormous conflicts and corruption in city politics when no group would allow the others to take credit for their initiatives. So-called reformers denied that the ward heelers could achieve anything of note, but obviously they did. By 1900 the physical infrastructure and social services in American cities were running well ahead of British and continental cities. Canadian cities including Toronto had the American scene as a role model at least up to 1912. In practice they often followed American techniques, while praising the municipal innovations of Joseph Chamberlain in England.[21] That American architects and other experts could ride overnight on the train from New York or Chicago had something to do with the practice. How much outside expert opinion was asked for and accepted as contrasted to home-grown innovativeness has yet to be investigated. A longer run view of this century — that Canadian cities are better managed than American metropolises — suggests that foreign innovations were filtered. What were useful were adapted, what were then called "Yankee fads" rejected.[22]

In the event, the rapid growth of Toronto inspired a great deal of energy in solving the problems raised by that growth. After the slow 1860s and not very vigorous 1870s, the 1880s led to increased congestion and living conditions for the poor that encouraged a mounting interest in public health. The 1880s also saw a take-off of speculative activity and house building. This induced an interest in planning. Toronto was hardly exceptional in these matters; other cities largely led the way though certainly incorporation of the city in 1834 had been partly to counter poor public health conditions. Torontonians participated in a widespread set of interests throughout the western world, all to bring about order, efficiency and even beautification. Undoubtedly, these appeared with the enormous expansion of an affluent middle class. From this aided by an explosion of innovations in science and

technology came the professionals to deal with the conditions. Businessmen promoted new municipal works, partly through an increasingly vigorous Board of Trade. Some politicians caught the improvement fever, but others had to be persuaded to approve developments. Besides, the electors who had to approve large public enterprises often were reluctant to supply the funds through their property taxes until convinced. But in the 1880s and the 1900s the city provided leadership or responded to the initiatives of others on a whole range of issues. Since the stories of several enterprises are now quite well known I will only touch on some particularly relevant to the waterfront.[23]

The first response came in water and sewerage. Big crowded cities, but more importantly, the rise of the middle class and the discovery of germs induced a whole array of public health measures. Not least of these were the tapping of fresh clean water and the disposal of human waste. In Toronto the long convoluted debate on these matters was finally settled in 1907 and 1908 when the decisions were made to install systems that would reduce death rates. After that Toronto would become a leader in the control of communicable diseases. Control over water and sewage indicated that Toronto could indeed solve problems.[24]

The second, in development control and planning. Like American cities after 1880 and especially after 1900 the province allowed Toronto modest controls over streets, alleys and the layout of lots, after 1907 within the city and after 1912 in a zone five miles beyond city limits. In 1912 the province actually permitted the drawing up a general plan. Ever since 1905 a group of architects and others had been pushing for a plan — after all, the business elites of big American cities using the services of Daniel Burnham and others were drawing up schemes for civic squares, diagonal streets, street widenings, and parkways. By 1910 city council was finally convinced and so set up a Civic Improvement Committee to draw up a plan for the city. Besides, the city used 1903 legislation to create parks and then playgrounds toward the end of the decade. Even though the initiatives for city plans would finally come to naught, all of this action undoubtedly contributed to the drawing of a plan for the harbour. That in 1914 the American Planning Association met in Toronto with the harbour plan very much up front, indicates how powerful the planning impulse had been in the decade before. Toronto had joined the same civic league as other metropolises.[25]

Third, the condition of the waterfront itself. Any self-respecting city used fill to make expensive land cheaply from the lake or sea; Toronto had witnessed two earlier rounds to accommodate the railways. From the 1880s onward — and especially after 1900 — a rising tide of opinion pushed by the Board of Trade gradually persuaded the city to act. The shallow harbour was an embarrassment. But more important the city pursued bigger game: land fill for industry. The architects' city plan of 1905, the Board of Trade plan of 1907 (Figure 2), and the Civic Guild plan of 1909 all suggested filling Ashbridge's Bay for industry.[26]

After all, had not W. J. Gage, in 1906 president of the Board of Trade, predicted that Toronto in twenty-five years would be a city of over one million people with "a great ocean port, filled with steamships ... carrying goods made in Toronto factories to distant parts of the British Empire ...."[27]? Did not Mayor G. R. Geary in 1911 assert that "we have failed miserably to avail ourselves of her [nature's] bounty," and that the waterfront "should team with great industries instead of the waste places that now adorn it ...."?[28] And did not Public Works Minister, the Honourable Robert Rogers, assure Torontonians: "Reclaim all that land and you will have it all leased within five years ...."?[29] Therefore, a context of action based on growth and a rising tide of civic pride led to the creation of the commission and the plan.

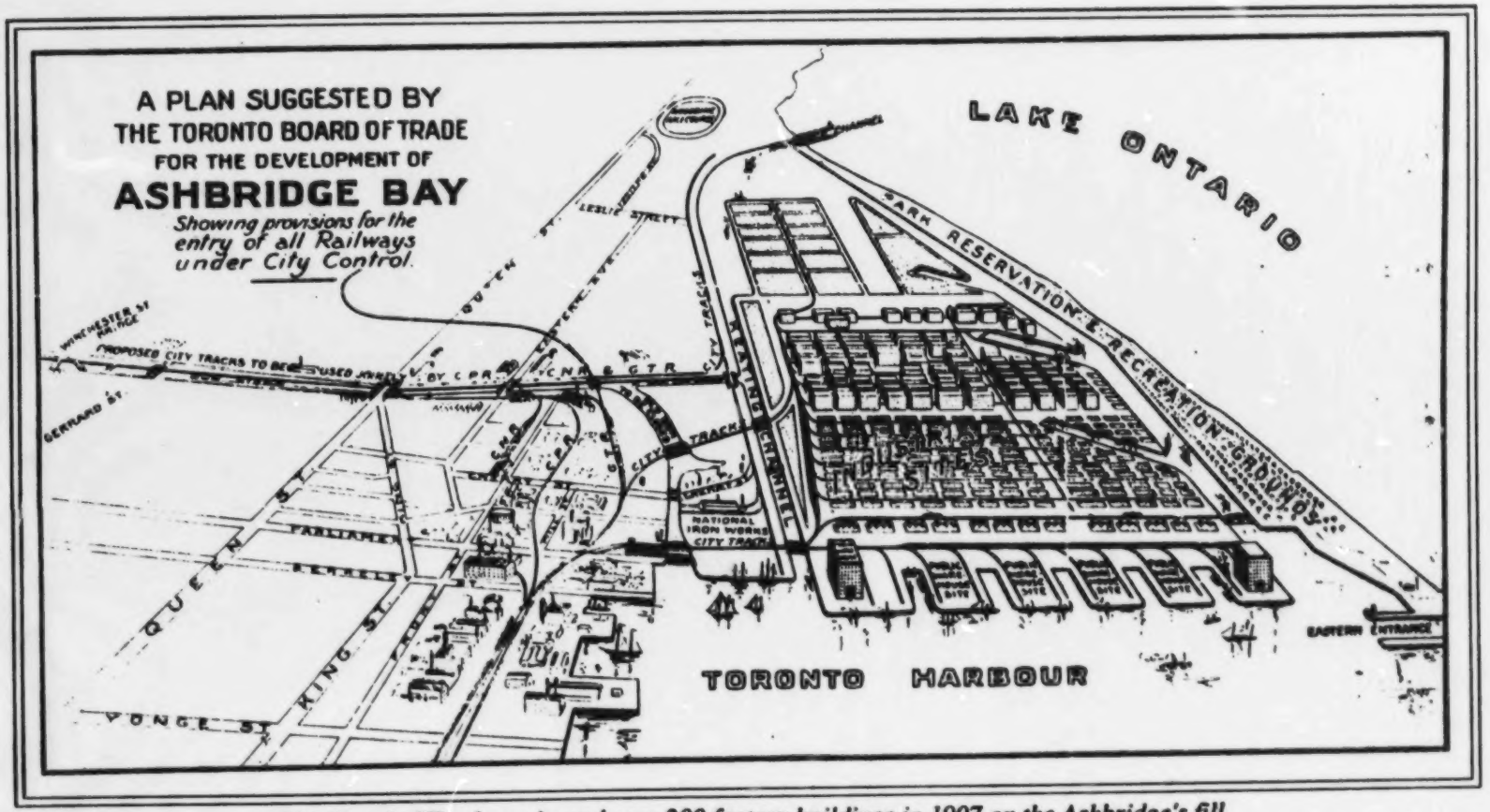

FIGURE 2 *The Board of Trade envisaged over 200 factory buildings in 1907 on the Ashbridge's fill.*

Source: Toronto Harbour Commission Archives (THCA), PD 1/1/57.

THE 1912 PLAN: PROPOSALS, FULFILLMENTS AND FAILURES

The plan was quickly drawn up after the commission was established (Figure 3). Landfill and reshaping the front of the city was to achieve three main goals: improved and extended parkland and a parkway, improved shipping and industrial areas along the central waterfront and Ashbridge's Bay. Parks would enhance a city striving for metropolitan status. Chicago had already succeeded in creating a magnificent waterfront, partly by pushing heavy industry and much shipping to the south: Lake Calumet was its Ashbridge's Bay. So the islands were reshaped, a strip of park would run along the lake south of Ashbridge's and again west from Bathurst. All would be linked by a parkway from the Humber River to Woodbine Avenue and in turn to the circumambient parkway around the outer margins of the city for Sunday carriage and increasing auto outings. It would fit the city plans of 1905, 1909 and 1911 that all highlighted a parkway. The western parkway — Lakeshore Boulevard — would also allow for commuting by car from Home Smith's Kingsway developments.[30]

Shipping and manufacturing were linked. The Harbour Trust had failed to dredge the harbour deep enough to accommodate the increasing number of larger steel-hulled steam powered ships replacing sailing ships.[31] Perhaps one of the reasons for retarded action was the slow increase in the tonnage of Ontario's merchant fleet in the 1880s and 1890s. From 1900 the rapid increase would suggest that action had become imperative, especially as the first 600-foot laker had been built in 1907.[32] Even so, Toronto was not sharing in the increase. Over the first decade of the century, ships in and out of Toronto's harbour carried on the average a very slight 255,404 tons annually.[33] The belief was strong that Toronto's shipping would gain.

With the strong industrialization of Toronto, it comes with little surprise that the Board of Trade and the commissioners sought to create industrial land. But what they had in mind was not very clear. In the 1907 plan over 200 buildings row on row seem to be factories (Figure 2). In the 1912 plan a mixture of higher value manufacturing and bulk storage apparently was expected, as suggested in a cross section from the lake to beyond the dredged channel through the site on which later the Hearn generating plant was built. It diagrammatically shows about a dozen factories and warehouses, most loft style up to five

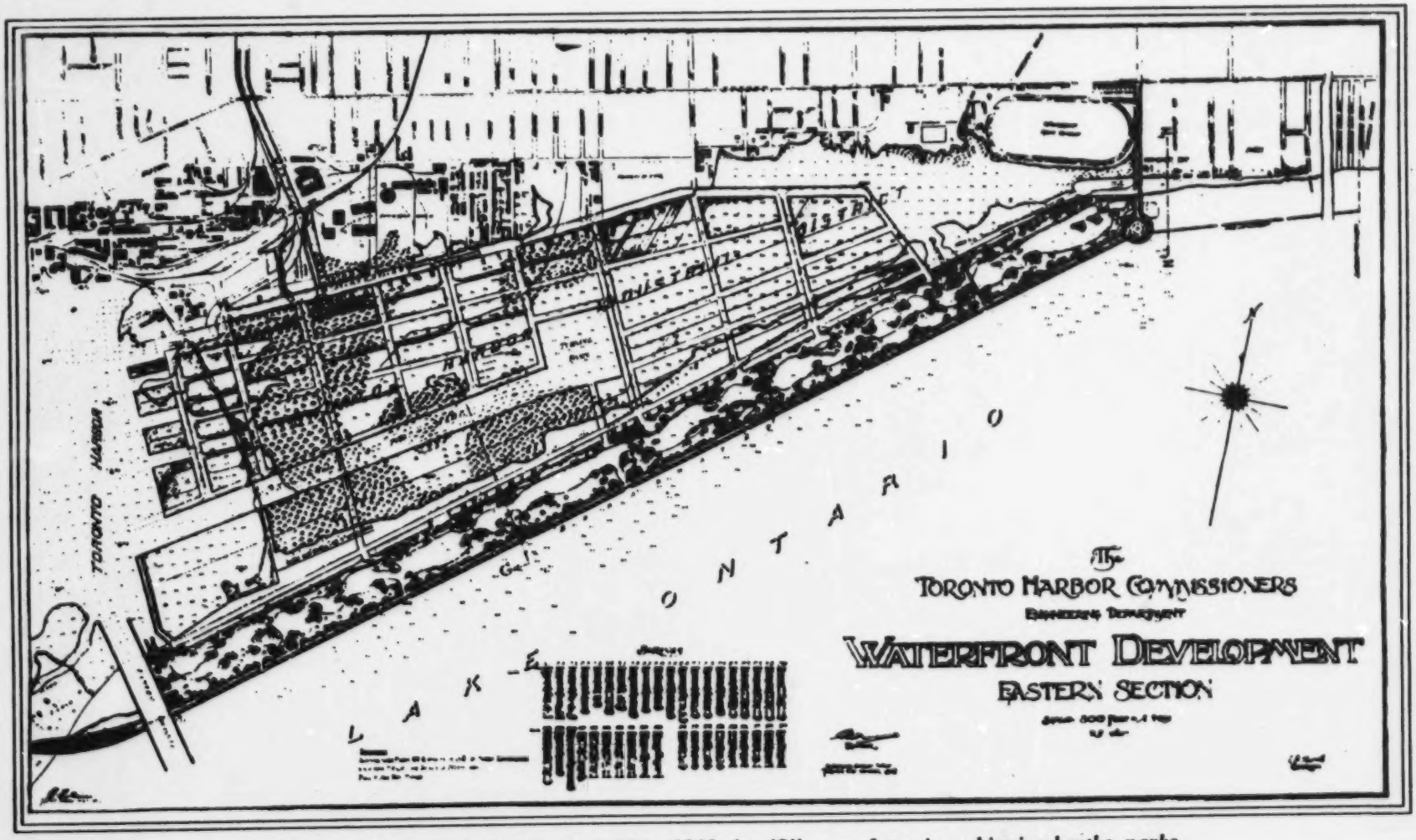

FIGURE 3 *The Eastern Section of the Waterfront Plan, 1912: landfill, manufacturing, shipping berths, parks and a parkway. Manufacturing was proposed for Ashbridge's Bay and the Central Waterfront.*

Source: THC, *Toronto Waterfront Development, 1912 - 1919*. (Toronto, 1912), p. 10.

storeys, and one of a single storey. North of the channel is a ship unloading into a grain elevator. In 1914 Robert Gourlay informed the assembly of American town planners that besides "ample" warehouse space, coordination of water, rail and radial interurban traffic, a large central wholesale and retail food market, land was available "for manufacturing any product on either a large or small scale."[34] American branch plants were expected. "Model factories" would be built at the foot of Cherry and Bathurst streets.[35] In 1914 the THC's secretary, Alexander Lewis, suggested to the commissioners that it would be better to proceed with a model six-storey loft type structure than a combination factory/warehouse structure. He and THC's chief engineer Edward L. Cousins had "some doubt" about warehousing, but felt that "factory space would be immediately in demand."[36] Further, Gourlay expected the "construction and repair of all classes of the smallest pleasure craft or the largest inland freight and passenger steamers." A 1915 publicity statement stressed types that were market-oriented branch plants and gave a choice of water or rail.[37]

After the war, in 1919 Cousins and others talked again of the model factory. Financing and rail access were calculated.[38] Soon after, the 1920 THC Annual Report recommended attracting "basic" industry and those not then "represented" in Toronto. In fact, it went so far as to assert that the "possibilities of establishing branch British industrials ... are almost unlimited."[39] In 1925 the THC reported to City Council that "in reclaiming the lands [of the central waterfront] very valuable properties accrued to the City and Harbour Commission for light loft type manufacturing, warehousing and terminal properties."[40] Then late in the decade, the chairman of the newly-created Toronto Industrial and Publicity Commission explained to an April 1929 Empire Club audience that two types of industry had to be distinguished: high value and low value, the former should occur on the waterfront, the latter in the suburbs on cheap land.[41] Finally, in 1931 another comment suggested that the area was intended for "heavy industry," whatever that meant.[42] In sum, the industrial strategy was hardly focused: any and all kinds including American and British branch plants, though at times the kinds that would fit into loft type structures seemed the most preferred.

As is well known the plan was fulfilled as far as the land fill is concerned, first Ashbridge's Bay and the west central, then the east central waterfront as the harbour was dredged. As for industry, by 1933 the THC was proud to report that in Ashbridge's, forty-one

firms had located. On the central waterfront west of Yonge were forty-three mostly dating from the late 1920s, such as the Terminal Warehouse, Tip Top Tailors and Maple Leaf Stadium. Canada Steamship docks graced the central harbourfront.[43] But this is hardly what had been expected. Most of the space was devoted to low value activity (relative to space): coal yards, concrete works and oil refining in Ashbridge's, and grain storage and processing on the west central waterfront. Besides bulk cargo, mainly grain in the late 1920s and then coal and coke after 1931, made up the vast majority of the tonnage coming into the harbour. Outflow of finished products was on the same scale as early in the century. Much of Ashbridge's and the central waterfront east of Yonge remained empty for some time. With few exceptions, high value manufacturing did not materialize as hoped.

Why did the commissioners fail? Six reasons can be given, though tentatively pending further research. First, timing. Given the enormous growth of Toronto and of manufacturing leading up to the plan, one can accept the view that the commissioners were justified in promoting manufacturing. Unluckily for them the economy slowed down, and although revived for the war effort and in the latter half of the 1920s, it never did reach the levels preceding 1913 again until the 1940s. The 1914 THC Annual Report noted the downturn.[44] No reports were issued for several years before 1920 suggesting little activity. Perhaps the building of the administrative offices in 1917 reflected the brief optimism engendered by the establishing of an electric steel plant and shipbuilding for military purposes.[45] In early 1920s reports did not appear annually after a heady upbeat 1920 report that also explicitly noted slow conditions. Even staff were laid off. "The years 1923, 1924, 1925 could not in any sense be termed years of industrial expansion..." the THC told the world.[46] The waterfront even lost the electric steel plant and shipbuilding yards. Success was achieved only in the late 1920s. But by then the THC was in financial difficulty; it sought to sell rather than lease land to pay off debts more quickly. City Council, which guaranteed THC bonds, became restive.[47] Only once before in 1917 had the THC sold land. Despite the depression the early 1930s a large number of bulk dealers especially of coal moved into the Ashbridge's fill. But expectations had hardly been fulfilled.

In the period 1909 to 1912 when manufacturing firms grew apace, factory buildings in Toronto sprouted possibly even more, resulting in excess capacity, a second reason for

failure. In 1911 industrial building permits granted by the city totalled 110 and in 1912, 86. Taken together these two years almost doubled the number of permits of any previous two years since 1905.[48] Thus it may well be that the commissioners were overly optimistic. A 1915 THC publicity brochure remained modestly optimistic, noting the number of new factories, including American branch plants added to the city over the previous two or three years.[49] But in 1918 the THC responding to slow development in cooperation with the city set up an Industrial Department to promote manufacturing. Cousins even went to Britain to promote industry. Interestingly, the mayor, Tommy Church, tried to cut short his visit. Although he backed off soon after, Church was worrying about the rising mill rate. Restraint not expansion was on his mind, a clear indication that the heady pre-1913 days were over. Cousins stayed for a while, perhaps capturing a Welsh company that took over the electric steel plant, if only for a short time.[50] But pursuing British companies amounted to nothing more than a wistful hope that Britain and the empire would rise again.

Although the 1920 report could speak of "unlimited possibilities," the high cost of building materials was inhibiting construction at the time. Intentions to build remained. But it also complained that small towns and Hamilton were bonusing new operations, a practice condemned by the THC.[51] In the two THC reports covering 1921, 1922 and 1923 and 1925 recognition of excess capacity in Toronto finally came to the fore in discussions of the number of factories that had been built and set up in Toronto. Between 1919 and 1922, 110 new industries had been established, mostly branch plants. Of these 75 per cent rented, 15 per cent purchased existing properties and only 10 per cent actually built. The majority may have rented because of uncertain futures, as noted by the report, but that nine out of ten occupied existing space suggests overcapacity, likely left over from the 1909 to 1912 boom. Nine of the eleven that did build located on THC land. But, between 1923 and 1925 only 37 plants and 20 new companies were created in Toronto, seemingly mostly elsewhere in the city. The 1925 report concluded that while the THC expected more, "we have privately-owned lands in the City and outskirts to compete with, in many instances at lower prices."[52] Large tracts that would persist for years on THC lands would testify to an enduring extreme overcapacity of industrial land. Nonetheless, in 1927 Mayor Thomas Foster rejected the notion of a park owned by the city on the central waterfront adjacent to the THC office building, arguing that "it would be a criminal waste to use [the proposed twelve acres] as a park." Doggedly

repeating the plan's goal, he insisted that "visitors will be more impressed if they see big groups of busy factories on the harbour land...."[53]

Third, the commissioners misread what was possible qualitatively not only quantitatively. They desired to promote all kinds of industry for their lands. Gourlay's 1914 assertion that all types would be attracted showed a lack of sensitivity to what had been happening. But had they noticed that most of the manufacturing had been spreading out along or near the rail lines to the west and northwest (Figures 1, 4), and beyond city boundaries in Port Credit, Mimico, New Toronto, Weston, Mt. Dennis and Leaside? The inputs for high-value goods such as steel from Hamilton probably came by rail. Similarly, lumber from sawmills for construction and durable household goods, textiles from Quebec and eastern Ontario for clothing, livestock for the stock yards and meat packing at St. Clair Avenue and Keele Street were obviously rail dependent. The railways in place by that time were well positioned in Toronto to handle subsequent growth of most plants dealing in high-value manufacturing. In fact, a division of labour between water-borne and railway traffic was already apparent by the 1880s.[54] Yet, even coal was shipped by rail more than by water: between 1886 and 1906 rail's share quintupled while water's rose by only 30 per cent.[55] It seems even coal yards could not be attracted in the short run. Certainly as subsequent experience would affirm, providing for bulk storage and associated manufacturing was sensible. Oil refining and storage did expand across Keating Channel onto the Ashbridge's fill in the latter 1910s as did concrete mixing. Not until the early 1930s did coal yards locate there. The commissioners were not only too late to cash in on the great outburst of manufacturing that would not be repeated again until the 1940s, they were unable to see the excess capacity building up. Perhaps most myopic was their expectation of high value-added processing.

Relative inaccessibility for workers could possibly be a fourth reason, though this would be hard to substantiate. Many male industrial workers walked to work as they lived near plants in working-class residential districts. To reach waterfront plants would have meant using part of their still modest incomes for streetcar tickets or in some cases a long walk. Certainly female clothing workers would have found the trip to factory lofts in Ashbridge's Bay a long trip compared to walking say, from Bellevue Avenue and Nassau

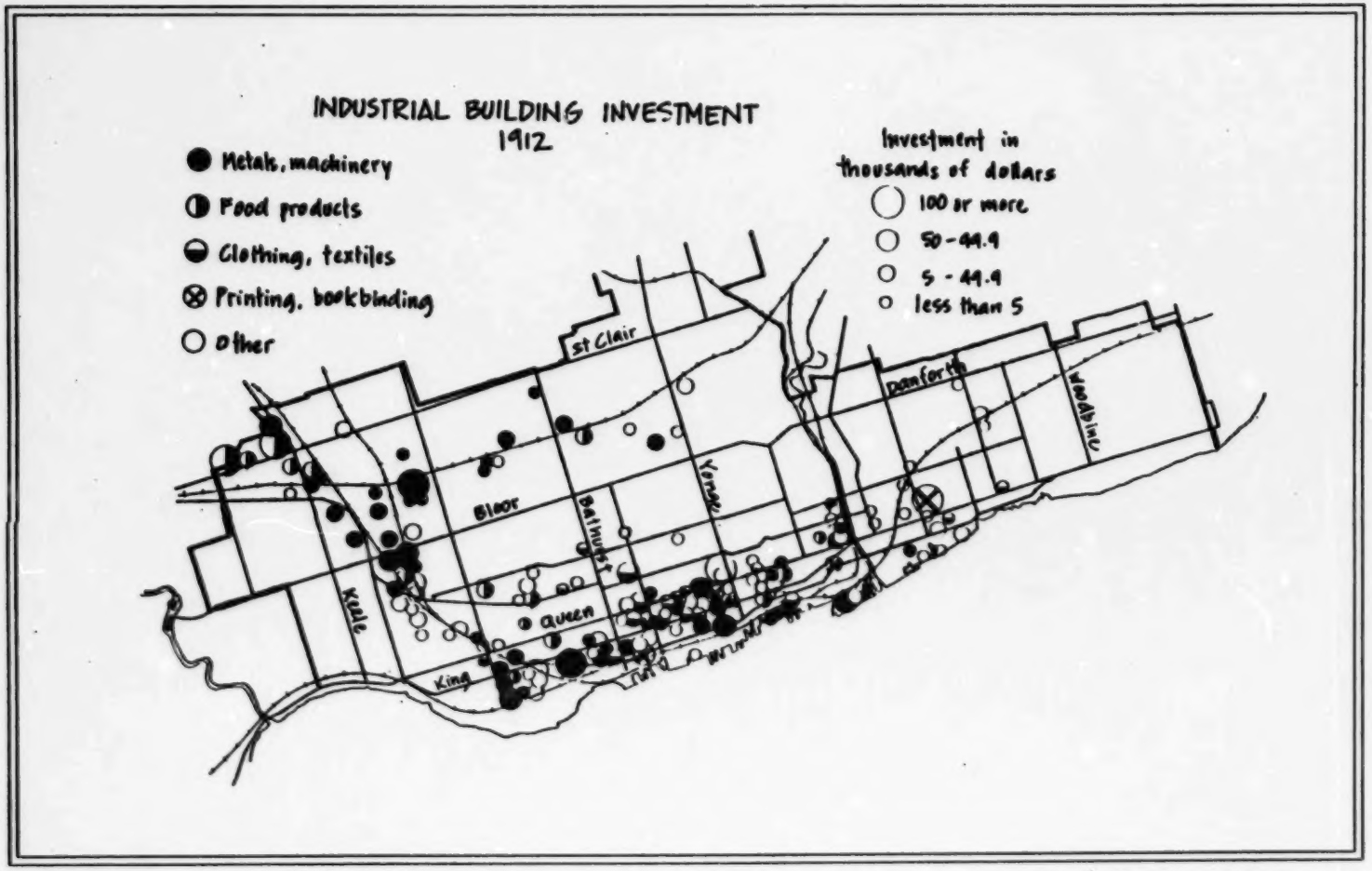

FIGURE 4

Most of the additions of manufacturing between 1890 and 1923 took place between 1905 and 1913. Note the locations along rail lines and to immediate west of downtown along King Street. Beyond the city (and this map), other manufacturing plants were built in Mt. Dennis and Weston to the northwest, Leaside to the northeast, along the lakeshore to Mimico and New Toronto to the west, and on TIIC lands.

Source: See Figure 1.

Street to Spadina Avenue and Adelaide Street, by the 1920s the focus of the clothing industry. Further research on location decisions by firms might shed some light on this matter.

Fifth, the THC reports of the early 1920s blamed the railways for failing to start on the viaduct that the courts had ordered in 1913.[56] Fill on central waterfront east of Yonge Street was held back until the mid-1920s when the viaduct was begun, and thus hindered the possibility of industry. Yet the area remained empty after the *Tornado* and the *Cyclone* sluiced sludge from the bottom of the bay to create the land (Figure 5). Likewise failing to build the viaduct could hardly have been a factor in retarding manufacturing in Ashbridge's since spurs were indeed run into the electric steel plant in 1917. In short, even had the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific been accommodating, a viaduct would not have speeded up development. Besides, the railways too were caught in the downturn after 1913 and with overcapacity to an even deeper level of financial malaise than the THC — every rail line except the CPR was taken over by the federal government between 1915 and 1923. The Canadian National was forced to abandon lines. But its creation allowed the viaduct to proceed. When finally completed in 1931 had it helped the THC? It seems unlikely.

Sixth, the Welland Canal upgrading was not completed until 1931 despite optimistic talk in 1912 about its imminent opening. The tardiness was undoubtedly a factor because shipping in Toronto's harbour doubled in the first year after opening. The tonnage of American bituminous coal and coke jumped ten times between 1930 and 1933. Coal yards did move to Ashbridge's open spaces; by 1933, there were twelve.[57] Even though the commissioners had dredged the harbour to adequate depths in 1913 and 1914, coal had continued to come by rail apparently because the cost at Ohio and Pennsylvania ports on Lake Erie of transshipping onto small ships using the old canal was higher than sending hopper cars directly. It seems then that the coal companies had no clear reason to move from the central waterfront until the 1930s when larger ships could arrive at Ashbridge's docks.

But if bulk storage and processing did finally provide the answer for Ashbridge's and wheat and barley for part of the west central waterfront, the vision had to be clearly toned down. Fanciful assertions in 1915 that it was cheaper to ship to and from Fort William by

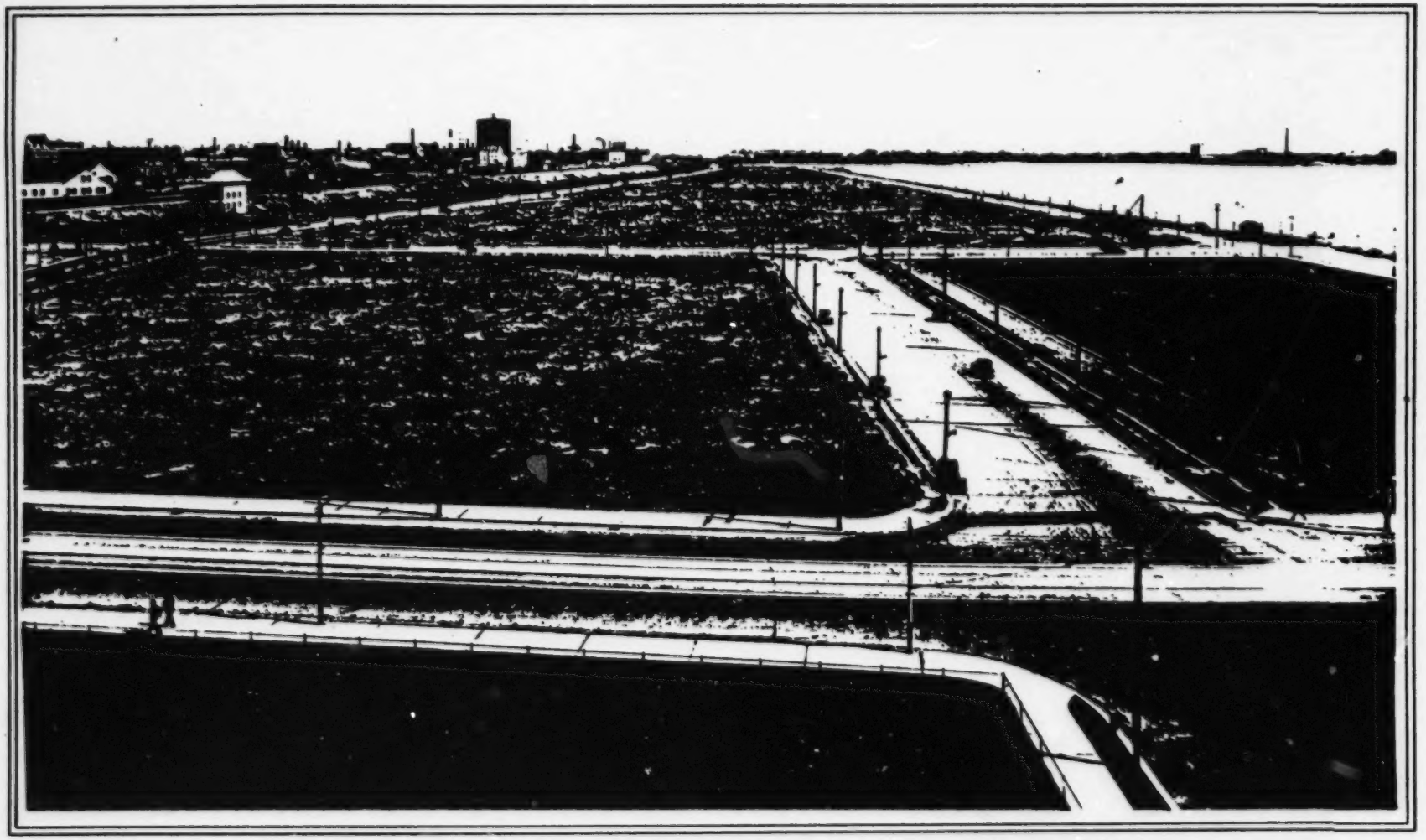

FIGURE 5 *Looking east from the Harbour Commission offices across Bay Street, 1 October 1934.*

Source: (THCA), PC 1/1/10704. See *THC, the Port and Harbour of Toronto 1834-1934, Centennial Year* (Toronto, 1934), 42.

water than rail had to be forgotten.[58] The commissioners' expectations were far too expansive. Although we can applaud John Ross Robertson for persisting on public ownership through his *Telegram* articles and the Board of Trade for their initiative, obviously no one had any kind of industrial strategy beyond throwing land (if not financial) subsidies at industrialists.[59] Had they more clearly recognized that Ashbridge's and even the central waterfront should cater to bulk low-value manufacturing and storage, a more realistic approach might have been taken. But then they might not have acquired the *Tornado* and *Cyclone* to do all the dredging. It would not be the only time that Toronto's vaunted reputation of good management would be punctured: later the conversion of the islands totally to parkland foundered, the Seaway's effects were less than anticipated, and Harbourfront went awry. But then we can hardly blame the commissioners for overenthusiasm: who was not caught up in the hype generated by the boom in the years before 1913? And we can hardly blame the commissioners for not having an industrial strategy. Unlike some western European countries, Japan, and now possibly Quebec, the governments of Canada and of Ontario since then have hardly been the devisers of carefully worked out industrial policies.

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